

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
Shepard Building  
255 Westminster Street  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

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## NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Elliot Krieger, Media Relations – (401) 222-4600 ext. 2182

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### **Education Commissioner Releases Decision, Order on Hope High School**

PROVIDENCE - Education Commissioner Peter McWalters today ordered that Hope High School continue to operate as three small, autonomous learning communities, each with the authority to recruit, hire, evaluate, and retain staff and to allocate funds.

The Commissioner's Order leaves Hope High School within the auspices of the Providence School Department but installs a Special Master to ensure implementation of a detailed Corrective Action Plan for the school. Under his authority, he could have taken the school under state control or he could have ordered the school to close.

In his Order of Reconstitution and an accompanying Corrective Action Plan for the school, McWalters mandated that all staff members who wish to remain at Hope be reviewed by a Teacher Review Team. The team will review each staff member's commitment to implementing reforms at the school.

"This plan for Hope High School represents a tremendous opportunity," said James A. DiPrete, Chairman of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education. "If this works well at Hope, the plan could be replicated in other schools that are in need of improvement."

"This Order and Plan are intended to quickly move the three Small Learning Communities forward on behalf of the students. This is not a takeover – but it is a transformation. Starting next September, I expect a dramatically better educational experience for the students at Hope High School. The Order calls on the district management and the union leadership to share the responsibility for implementing the new Plan at Hope High School," McWalters said. "The Providence School Department and the Providence Teachers' Union, working together, have developed a mechanism by which the district can resolve, as needed, contractual issues that could hamper implementation of reform efforts and strategies at Hope High School."

The Commissioner issued his initial Order of Reconstitution for Hope High School last June, and he held a show-cause hearing in December to determine whether the school should continue to operate during the next school year. The Decision, Order, and Plan released today are based on testimony and documents presented at that hearing, including a plan for the school drafted jointly by the Providence School Department and the Providence Teachers' Union.

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McWalters said that his review of the facts presented to him at the hearing “showed both the hard work on the part of many people involved with developing the program at Hope High School, as well as many of the frustrations and barriers that have impeded implementation of reforms.”

He added that his Decision and Order must “serve as a catalyst for moving closer to an educational experience at Hope High School that is truly built around the needs of the students, not built around a structure that we adults believe is expedient.”

Under the Commissioner’s Order, Hope High School must implement the High School Regulations, adopted by the Board of Regents in 2003, which emphasize literacy, personalization, and proficiency-based graduation requirements. The Order specifies that Hope High School must implement:

- Program offerings and student schedules based on student need
- Faculty advisors and advisory periods for all students
- Increased professional development and common planning time for staff
- Involvement of families, students, and community partners at the decision-making level

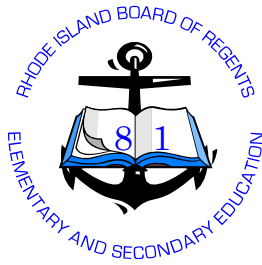
Representatives of several partner agencies who pledged to work closely with the communities at Hope High School attended today’s news conference to express their support for the Commissioner’s Corrective Action Plan. These partners include:

- Rhode Island School of Design
- Brown University
- Rhode Island College
- The Rhode Island Tech Collective
- The Providence Educational Excellence Coalition
- The Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals

## Hope High School Intervention – A Timeline

<b>April 2000</b>	The R.I. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) begins regular meetings with Providence School Department (PSD) personnel to provide progressive support to the district in its efforts to improve student performance in its schools.
<b>June 2000</b>	RIDE commences formal intervention in Providence under authorities granted in Rhode Island's Progressive Support and Intervention law (R.I. General Laws 16-7.1-5) through entry into the "Providence Compact" and intervention agreement with the district. Hope High School is subject to the overall Progressive Support and Intervention oversight of the Commissioner from this point forward.
<b>February 2002</b>	RIDE releases first list of school-performance categories; Hope categorized as "low performing, not improving," missing all targets.
<b>April 2002</b>	RIDE and PSD continue their series of "Face-to-Face Meetings" to discuss low-performing schools.
<b>June 2002</b>	As a result of these meetings, RIDE and PSD agree that RIDE will intervene directly in Hope High School, as three years of progressive support have not reversed downward trends in student performance and other indicators. Commissioner Peter McWalters orders Hope High School to continue its ongoing process of reorganizing into at least three small learning communities. He orders PSD to submit a redesign plan for Hope High School by February 2003.
<b>December 2002</b>	RIDE releases second list of school-performance categories. Hope High School again listed as "low performing, not improving."
<b>February 2003</b>	McWalters receives redesign plan from PSD and Hope; sends plan back for major revisions.
<b>March 2003</b>	Plan resubmitted and provisionally accepted by McWalters. He gives Hope clearance to open in September 2003 as three small learning communities, but he raises significant issues regarding professional development, course assignments, and other topics. Requires monthly reports on plan implementation as RIDE Intervention at Hope High School, led by the Commissioner, continues.
<b>September 2003</b>	Hope High School opens as three small learning communities.
<b>October 2003</b>	RIDE releases first classifications under No Child Left Behind Act; Hope is "in need of improvement – insufficient progress."
<b>January 2004</b>	Governor Carcieri visits Hope High School and pledges \$600,000 to continue reform efforts underway at Hope.
<b>June 2004</b>	Commissioner McWalters issues an Order of Reconstitution for Hope High School and a Show-Cause Order, schedules a hearing at which PSD must demonstrate why Hope High School should remain in operation as currently constituted. He orders numerous changes regarding staffing, student advisories, and professional development at the school. He freezes the \$600,000 earmarked for Hope and asks for a detailed operating budget for the school immediately and a Corrective Action Plan by July 2004.
<b>August 2004</b>	Providence Supt. Melody Johnson provides a draft Corrective Action Plan to Commissioner McWalters, but plan has not been approved by faculty, union. District requests an opportunity to submit a plan after seeking faculty and union approval. McWalters agrees to this request and demands more detailed plan.
<b>September 2004</b>	Hope High School opens for second year of operation as three small learning communities.
<b>November 2004</b>	Johnson informs Commissioner McWalters that PSD and Providence Teachers Union cannot reach accord on Corrective Action Plan. Commissioner says he will proceed with Show Cause Hearing. PSD subsequently submits a plan agreed to by district management and union but that lacks faculty approval.
<b>December 2004</b>	At Show Cause Hearing, Commissioner reviews plan submitted to determine its adequacy. Commissioner to decide

	whether Hope will continue to operate in the 2005-2006 school year.
<b>February 2005</b>	Commissioner releases Decision, Order of Reconstitution, and Consolidated Corrective Action Plan, ensuring the Hope High School will operate as three small, autonomous learning communities in 2005-2006. Plan details provisions for family and community involvement, student advisories, and faculty retention. Special Master to be appointed to monitor implementation of the Plan.



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## Fact Sheet

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### **Commissioner's Decision on Hope High School**

#### **I. Four Sections:**

- Introduction
- Decision
  - Background and Travel of the Case
  - Findings of Fact
  - Commissioner's Decision: Discussion and Conclusion of Law
- Order of Reconstitution and Corrective Action
- Consolidated Corrective Action Plan for Hope High School

#### **II. Highlights of the Findings:**

- A. Positive developments over past four years of state involvement, including:
  - Development of comprehensive redesign plan by Providence Public Schools
  - Formation of the Joint Union-District School Improvement Intervention Team
  - Creation of three small learning communities at Hope High School
- B. Persistent problems at Hope High School, including:
  - Lack of coordination among the small learning communities regarding staffing, schedule
  - Insufficient student advisories
  - Lack of flexible student day
  - No improvement in graduation rate
  - Failure to implement the Regents' High School Regulations
  - Insignificant parent and community partnerships

#### **III. Highlights of the Commissioner's Order:**

- Appointment of Special Master, with all powers of the Commissioner, to oversee implementation of Corrective Action Plan
- Review of all current faculty to retain only those who accept conditions of Corrective Action Plan
- Teacher assignments, schedules, and instruction to be determined by each Small Learning Community and to be based on student needs
- Full and meaningful participation by parents, students, and community partners
- Minimum of 15 hours professional development for all teachers

#### IV. Highlights of the Corrective Action Plan

- All elements are drawn from the (9) plans submitted to RIDE by Providence Public Schools since January 2003
- Three small learning communities established as autonomous, site-based managed entities with authority to recruit, hire, evaluate, and retain staff and to allocate funds
- Advisory caseload set at 15:1
- Faculty assignments and student schedules to be based on student need and program design
- Teacher Review Team to review commitments of all teachers who choose to stay at Hope; may recommend against retaining teachers at the school.
- Superintendent to review commitments of all administrators who choose to stay at Hope; may decline to retain administrators at the school based on commitments
- Teachers necessary to particular program of a small learning community shall not be bumped or laid off without consultation between Joint Labor-Management Intervention Committee and the Commissioner
- In future years, teachers who do not meet evaluation criteria established by the communities to be reassigned to another Providence School
- Ninth-grade academies established to begin advisory process for incoming freshmen
- Curriculum and Instruction Committees at each community to establish curriculums for fall 2005
- Campus Chief Operating Officer to be appointed and Campus Coordinating Council to be established to resolve issues arising from use of shared facilities and resources
- School Improvement Teams for each community shall have students, parents, and community partners as decision-making members
- Community partnerships for each community, which are to be established at the operational level, to be formalized through written agreements.
- Advisories immediately reinstated
- Individual Learning Plans to be in place by November for all students
- Each community to implement the RIDE Comprehensive Counseling model
- Faculty advisors to be primary contact with family of each student; faculty members to have no more than 15 advisees
- Summer Professional Development Academy mandated for all faculty to address issues of personalization, literacy, and performance-based graduation requirements; school ordered to meet minimum professional-development requirements of Regents' High School Regulations